

Joshua 22:13-34 – 23 - Thursday, August 9th, 2012

(13) Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, (14) and with him ten rulers, one ruler each from the chief house of every tribe of Israel; and each one *was* the head of the house of his father among the divisions of Israel. (15) Then they came to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them, saying, (16) "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD: 'What treachery *is* this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that you have built for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this day against the LORD? (17) Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us, from which we are not cleansed till this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD, (18) but that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? And it shall be, if you rebel today against the LORD, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel. (19) Nevertheless, if the land of your possession *is* unclean, *then* cross over to the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD's tabernacle stands, and take possession among us; but do not rebel against the LORD, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves an altar besides the altar of the LORD our God. (20) Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.' "

- It seems the two and a half tribes are just getting blasted for something that they're not guilty of doing, namely, rebelling against the God of Israel.
- Were the other nine and a half tribes gotten the facts before they react, this whole episode could have been avoided, and all this time not wasted.
- I suppose in all fairness to Phinehas, at least he's confronting them before a full on military attack is launched against them. Still, this is a shame.

- It's still a shame because they are bearing false witness, by virtue of the false accusation that they level against their brethren on merely rumors.
- While one might argue that what they did was right in confronting their brethren concerning an unthinkable sin, they still sin in confronting a sin.
- To me, this is textbook doing the right thing in the wrong way with the wrong heart, or as one said it, the right information but wrong implication.

(21) Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions of Israel: (22) "The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knows, and let Israel itself know—if *it is* in rebellion, or if in treachery against the LORD, do not save us this day. (23) If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer on it burnt offerings or grain offerings, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let the LORD Himself require *an account*. (24) But in fact we have done it for fear, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your descendants may speak to our descendants, saying, "What have you to do with the LORD God of Israel? (25) For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between you and us, *you* children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no part in the LORD.'" So your descendants would make our descendants cease fearing the LORD.' (26) Therefore we said, 'Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, (27) but *that it may be* a witness between you and us and our generations after us, that we may perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, "You have no part in the LORD.'" (28) Therefore we said that it will be, when they say *this* to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say, 'Here is the replica of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices; but it *is* a witness between you and us.' (29) Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn from following the LORD this day, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for grain offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the LORD our God which *is* before His tabernacle."

- This response from the eastern tribes is quite remarkable. By that I mean, they give an apt answer to the horrendous accusation against them.
- I can't help but wonder how the other tribes must have felt when they heard this. I can only imagine that there was a little bit of embarrassment.
- By the way, this whole thing would've never happened if the two and a half tribes hadn't asked to stay on the east side of the Jordan to begin with.

(30) Now when Phinehas the priest and the rulers of the congregation, the heads of the divisions of Israel who *were* with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them. (31) Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh, "This day we perceive that the LORD *is* among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD. Now you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD." (32) And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the rulers, returned from the children of Reuben and the children of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought back word to them. (33) So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God; they spoke no more of going against them in battle, to destroy the land where the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. (34) The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar, *Witness*, "For *it is* a witness between us that the LORD *is* God."

- What a glorious end to the chapter. Would to God that we would resolve conflicts with our brothers and sisters in Christ in such a peaceful way.
- Sadly, this represents the exception rather than the norm. I'll take it a step further and submit that this is the lost jewel in the body of Christ today.
- I'm of the belief that the mark of a truly spiritually mature believer and body of believers is how they dwell together peacefully and not in conflict.

Psalms 133:1-3 NKJV A Song of Ascents. Of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* For brethren to dwell together in unity! (2) *It is* like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. (3) *It is* like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing— Life forevermore.

Joshua 23: (1) Now it came to pass, a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age.

- About thirteen years have now passed between chapters twenty-two and twenty-three since the land was doled out to the children of Israel.
- Joshua is now at the age of 110 years old, and as some translations render it, he has not only waxed old, he's stricken in years as well.
- It's for this reason that he will deliver his parting words first to the elders in chapter twenty-three then to the Israelites in chapter twenty-four.

(2) And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers, and said to them: "I am old, advanced in age. (3) You have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God *is* He who has fought for you.

- Notice that right out of the shoot, Joshua gives all the glory to God for what He has done for the Israelites, taking none of the credit himself.
- The mark of a truly good and humble leader is that they never seek to glory in the flesh by drawing the attention to what they think they did.
- To do that is a sign of one being puffed up and full of pride thinking that they themselves had something to do with the success in their life.

(4) See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, as far as the Great Sea westward. (5) And the LORD your God will expel them from before you and drive them out of your sight. So you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you.

- The reason Joshua tells them it's still up to them to possess the land God promised them by their tribe is because he's passing the baton.
- In other words, the baton of leadership will now go from Joshua to each of the heads of the tribes instead, which means they have to lead.
- This will change again soon when the Israelites demand from Samuel that they have a king like all the other nations that are around them.

(6) Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left,

- Here in verse six, we have the first of four exhortations from Joshua and it's to courageously do all that's written in the Book of the law.
- More specifically Joshua is exhorting them to make all of their leadership decisions solely on the basis of what's written in the Word of God.
- Suffice it to say, this is paramount in its importance for any believer lest we turn aside from God's Word by making ungodly decisions.

(7) and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause *anyone* to swear *by them*; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them,

- Verse seven has Joshua's second exhortation, which is to remain separated from the world around them and the false gods they worship.
- We as believers are in the world, but we're not to be of the world such that we're part of the world, or as James says, friends with the world.
- The Apostle John takes it a step further with the exhortation to not love the world nor, the things that are in the world.

(8) but you shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.

- This third exhortation from Joshua is that they hold fast, or perhaps better said, cleave to the Lord their God as they had done thus far.
- What's interesting about this is that one can only cleave to the Lord proportionate to how they have separated from the world.
- Where we as believers get into trouble is when we have the proverbial "one-foot in the world, and one foot in the Lord," as it were.

- To have one-foot in the world, and one foot in the Lord is the most miserable place anyone can be, as there's no contentment in either.
- It's been said that you can have too much of the Lord to be content in the world, and too much of the world to be content in the Lord.
- The reason for this is that the world has come in between us, and the Lord, and created a distance that left unchecked can destroy us.

- By way of illustration, it would be like gluing two pieces of paper together, then sliding something in between them to separate them.
- The result of doing that is, you've destroyed the paper because now it's been torn apart and has holes in it.
- However, if the paper remains glued together, or cleaved together, if you prefer, holding fast, then nothing can separate it.

(9) For the LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations; but *as for* you, no one has been able to stand against you to this day. (10) One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the LORD your God *is* He who fights for you, as He promised you. (11) Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God.

- This brings us to our fourth exhortation from Joshua, and it's to love the Lord your God. The reason? Love is the catalyst to obedience.
- Let me explain, if I love God I will obey God because if I love God with all my heart, soul, and strength, then I won't want to sin against Him.
- I have a formula that I use to illustrate this and it goes like this; forgiven of much = loves much, and loves much = obey much.

(12) Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations—these that remain among you—and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, (13) know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

- Here Joshua explains to them that the consequences of their disobedience to these exhortations will be that God will no longer be for them.
- God will no longer drive out their enemies and the result will be that their enemies will become a snare, trap, scourge and thorn in their eye.
- Then, it ultimately leads to their perishing from the Promised Land that God had given to them all because they disobeyed this command.

(14) "Behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed. (15) Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all the good things have come upon you which the LORD your God promised you, so the LORD will bring upon you all harmful things, until He has destroyed you from this good land which the LORD your God has given you. (16) When you have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you."

- Sadly, this will happen to Israel as history bears out. God would judge them with the Assyrian's in 722 BC then the Babylonians in 586 BC.
- Then, in 70 AD the Romans would destroy the second temple, which is when Israel is dispossessed from the land until the year 1948.
- The lesson here becomes quite clear in that God is faithful to bless our obedience, but so too is He faithful to judge our disobedience.